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BAKER'S EDITION
OF PLAYS

SIX TO ONE



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BOSTON

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BAKER'S DARKEY PLAYS

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SIX TO ONE

OR

THE SCAPEGRACE

A Comedietta in One Act

BY

FRANCES AYMAR MATHEWS

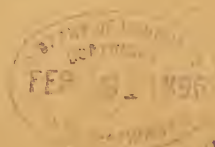
AUTHOR OF "A FINISHED COQUETTE," "WOONG A WIDOW," ETC.

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1896



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CHARACTERS

MRS. POMEROY DODGE	<i>Of Newport</i>
GLADYS QUINCY	<i>Her Boston Niece</i>
NINA CROSBY	<i>Her New York Niece</i>
MAUD LAWTON	<i>Her Philadelphia Niece</i>
ETHEL DAVIES	<i>Her Chicago Niece</i>
ALINE DE VALENCE	<i>Her French Niece</i>
ELIOT CHAMPNEY	<i>Her Nephew</i>



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SIX TO ONE.

SCENE. — MRS. DODGE's *morning-room at Oaktown, Newport*. MRS. DODGE and her five nieces discovered, GLADYS with a book, NINA counting bills in her purse, MAUD painting at easel (L.), ETHEL eating bonbons, and ALINE at piano (R.) with music.

MRS. D. (*embroidering*). Yes, my dear girls, I am happy to say that our feminine monotony is about to be broken in upon — flavored, so to speak, by a little masculine *sauce piquante*. My nephew is really coming to us. He arrives from Havre by *La Bourgogne* on Monday, and will come directly here.

GLADYS (*absently*). Which — which of your nephews is it, aunt dear?

MRS. D. Ah! (*sighs*) that scapegrace of an Eliot, of course. (ALINE *starts suddenly*.) I only wish it had been George, or Jack, or Douglas; but it's Eliot.

NINA (*snapping purse*). Oh, that's the cousin, girls, who hasn't a cent to his name, and who has lived abroad all his life. They say he's awfully handsome.

MAUD. Of course his family, being our own, is irreproachable. (*Paints*.)

ETHEL. Wonder if there's any "go" in him, girls? (*Eats*.)

GLADYS. And his intellect — being related to ours — is doubtless unimpeachable. (*Reads*.)

ETHEL. Aunt Dodge, do you think our dear cousin Eliot knows how to while away the long, soft hours of a June day — ah — in a manner agreeable to young relations of — er — our gender? That is, can Eliot Champney flirt? (ALINE *starts slightly*.)

MRS. D. Ethel, I am amazed at you! In any event, remember that he is your cousin, and do not attempt to trifle with his affections. Recollect that he has nothing, nor have you, and —

GLADYS. Has he ever written anything, aunt dear?

MRS. D. Beautiful letters, my dear — beautiful. Full of repentance and the list of his debts.

MAUD. Does he realize, I wonder, that he is a scion of a house that can go back to the thirteenth century, the tomb of whose ancestral founder is the chief ornament of the chapel of —

ETHEL. Goodness me! If he only knows enough to fan one, and row one, and drive one, and look at one — properly — he'll do; won't he, Nina?

NINA. Right, darling — right every time. (*Crosses to piano.*) Well, Aline, what are you doing? Your music is upside down. What have you got to say about the invader, eh?

MRS. D. Oh, my dear, Aline has been educated in France, a country where young girls have no thoughts upon the subject of the opposite sex — have they, dear?

ALINE. Aunt ees correct. Zat ees ze rule in France.

ETHEL. No exceptions, Aline? Oh—h, you are blushing! I've no doubt, girls, Eliot will fall dead in love with her straight off, and —

MRS. D. I trust there will be no "falling in love" in the case, and I hope that all of you will conduct yourselves with propriety, mingled with a proper degree of cousinly feeling.

NINA. Dear me! aunt, I am prepared to adore him — as a cousin.

ETHEL. And I to dote upon him — ditto.

GLADYS. And I to study with him.

MAUD. And I to coach him in genealogical lore.

MRS. D. And my little Aline?

ALINE. Oh, *chère tante*, I am prepared to — to welcome heem as ze son of my mothair's brothair. *N'est-ce pas?*

MRS. D. Charming! Now I must drive into town, my children; and you —

MAUD and ETHEL. Oh, we are going down on the cliffs. (*Exeunt L.*)

NINA and GLADYS. And we are going to Purgatory. (*Exeunt L.*)

ALINE. And I, *chère tante*, I have ze lettairs to write. (*Going up C.*)

MRS. D. Well, my dear, I expect Eliot —

ALINE (*at window, C.*). Zere he ees! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? (*Exit L.*)

(Enter, R., ELIOT.)

MRS. D. Eliot, my dear boy!

ELIOT. Aunt dear! Looking ten years younger than the last time I saw you in Paris! Pardon my uncereemonious descent upon you, but, to tell the truth, I found that I could reach here more quickly by train than by boat, and I made up my mind to take you by surprise, and come right on.

MRS. D. You did exactly as you should. Your room is ready for you, and your old aunt welcomes you. Ah! Eliot, thoughtless and gay, bad boy that you are, my house and my heart are ever open to my sister's child.

ELIOT. Oh, aunt dear! (*Crosses.*) I say, aunt, I — I've rather turned over a new leaf, you know. To be candid, I've sowed such fields full of wild oats that —

MRS. D. Eliot, my dear boy, I felt sure that the last time I paid your debts the turning-point must come soon. You will sow no more!

ELIOT. Not wild. I think I'll try the tame oats now; the domestic, the *chez soi* sort of thing, — society, and teas, and tennis, and all that.

MRS. D. Eliot Champney!

ELIOT (*kisses her*). Bless your heart, auntie, I've run over to America after a girl, — the prettiest, loveliest, best — oh, yes, the best; a tame girl, a jewel, a saint!

MRS. D. Eliot!

ELIOT. Really. A seraph, an angel, a beauty — *charmeuse! ravissante!*

MRS. D. Where is she?

ELIOT (*mournfully*). I don't know.

MRS. D. You don't know?

ELIOT. No. The delicious little witch! that's what I've crossed the Atlantic to find out — *where* she is.

MRS. D. Where did you meet her?

ELIOT (*sits*). Oh, aunt, I met her at an Embassy ball; a shy, sweet little creature, chaperoned by some one who watched her like an Argus, or any other disagreeable antiquity. But — I managed it.

MRS. D. Eliot!

ELIOT. Oh, tamely, I assure you. I told her of my — (*Rises.*) By Jove, aunt, when uncle told you, he meant it; so did I when I told that child. And then, whiz! whir! the first thing I know, she is sent off to America to visit some ridiculous old female relative or other.

MRS. D. You don't know whom?

ELIOT. No; I know nothing. I am expecting a letter from her hourly — that is, if the poor child received mine before she sailed.

MRS. D. Well, well! What is she like?

ELIOT. *Like!* Why, good heavens! Aunt Dodge, she isn't *like* anything. Did you ever hear of the girl a fellow is genuinely in love with being *like* anything or anybody else! It's because she *isn't like* that I like her. Oh, when I think, it seems to me that I shall go mad. I — I say, aunt, any pretty girls stopping with you here?

MRS. D. What!

ELIOT. To be sure. I must keep my hand in. I must have distraction, or —

MRS. D. My nieces, your cousins, are visiting me, — five lovely girls, each of them blessed with an unusual amount of common-sense, education, and accomplishments.

ELIOT. Whew-w! Five! Why, one would answer. Pretty?

MRS. D. Very.

ELIOT. Er — pleasant, lively, companionable young persons, or — You see, they're all strangers to me, aunt; don't even know their names. Are they of characters calculated to cause me to bless the hour I entered the house, or —

MRS. D. Eliot, they are lovely, sensible girls. Gladys is really very intellectual, Nina is witty, Maud is æsthetic, Ethel is natural, and —

ELIOT. Hold! Enough!

MRS. D. And I hope and trust that you will make yourself agreeable to *them all* in a *cousinly* way. Remember, you are the only man in the house.

ELIOT. I'll not forget it.

MRS. D. And be sure that you are impartial in your attentions.

ELIOT. I will do my best.

MRS. D. I have told them about you, and they are prepared to welcome you, and to accord you that sweet cousinly affection which —

ELIOT. Is my due.

MRS. D. Eliot! Recollect, no trifling; nothing but impartial, equal attention. They expect it, and it should be your pleasure, as well as duty, to meet them half-way.

ELIOT. Three-quarters.

MRS. D. I shall be obliged to leave you just now one moment. (*Exit* MRS. D., R.)

ELIOT. Certainly, aunt. "Impartial," "equal," "they expect it." They shall have it. But, by Jove! I don't know of but one way of making myself agreeable to girls, and that is by making love to them. I've tried all the other ways, and always signally *failed*. They like that, and they do not like anything else; and I'll be hanged if I can help giving a girl the sort of — of — well, bonbons, that she's fondest of. Hello, here's Aunt Dodge again, and — yes, a girl, a niece, no doubt, one of the illustrious five — in tow. Not bad-looking, either. (*Adjusts cravat at glass, C.*)

(*Enter* MRS. D. and GLADYS, R.)

MRS. D. Eliot, my dear, I wish to present you to your cousin, Gladys Quincy, — your Boston cousin.

ELIOT. Cousin Gladys, I am your most devoted. (*Exit* MRS. D., L.)

GLADYS. Mr. Champney, I am indeed charmed to welcome you to Newport and to your native land.

ELIOT. My dear cousin Gladys, could I but have known that such delightful relatives awaited me here, I should not have tarried abroad so long. Still, the benefits of foreign travel are —

GLADYS. Ah! yes, doubtless. But Boston — you know Boston, cousin Eliot, of course?

ELIOT. Never been there in my life.

GLADYS. *Is — it — possible?* Well, then, of course, you are not really competent to judge of — anything. How sad!

ELIOT. Very. But do make an exception. Don't you think, my dear cousin Gladys, that I might form some sort of a judgment on — woman's beauty, for example?

GLADYS. Oh, cousin Eliot, what is beauty?

ELIOT. Cousin Gladys, it is an entrancing commodity.

GLADYS. Oh, do not be so foolish, so ephemeral, so frivolous. Beauty is but the play of the vital fluid beneath the outer tissues; beauty is but the *de* or *inflection* of the facial curve; beauty is naught save the color of the optics, the hue of the capillary system, the symmetry of the auricular orifice. Beauty — bah! Cousin Eliot, give me *brains*!

ELIOT. Can't spare any, my dear cousin; haven't enough for myself.

GLADYS. Oh, I didn't me — I meant that in comparison with culture, education, intellect, what mere perfection of outline or —

ELIOT. But when one has both?

GLADYS. One should then forget the physical in the ideal ; one should seek to sink the material in the mental.

ELIOT (*pensively*). I wonder if I ever could.

GLADYS. Certainly — *if you try*.

ELIOT. Will you, dearest Gladys, guide my — scientifically speaking — infantile footsteps in the paths that lead to that pure empyrean ? If you would —

GLADYS. Oh, gladly ! I have always longed, yearned, for a proselyte, a disciple, a pupil. Let me, dear cousin Eliot, wean you from the unprofitable mazes of the ball-room, and lead you, instead, to our Monday lectures.

ELIOT. Oh, willingly.

GLADYS. In lieu of the billiard-table, let me enroll you as a member of the Browning Society. (*Draws out note-book.*)

ELIOT. With delight. I am the owner of a Webster's Unabridged. (*GLADYS writes in book.*)

GLADYS. Rather than the unstable seductions of whist, cigars, the race-course, the polo ground, and the foils (*draws out note-book No. 2*), allow me to nominate you for election to the Nineteenth Century United Progressive and Intellect League.

ELIOT. By all means. (*GLADYS writes.*)

GLADYS. There. Oh, cousin Eliot (*clasps her hands tragically*), I feel that my mission has begun. It is to lead your spirit to a true knowledge of its inner and better self, to an appreciation of the glorious aims, the splendid possibilities, of your higher nature. What do Emerson, Carlyle, Lecky, Draper, Darwin, all tell us ?

ELIOT. Indeed, I don't know.

GLADYS. Well, you will learn.

ELIOT. I only know that you have led me into a path strewn with roses, where I have listened to the voice of an angel, looked into the eyes of a saint. Oh, Gladys, sweet cousin Gladys, do you not know that I love you ?

GLADYS. Love me, cousin Eliot ?

ELIOT. Oh, yes ; and you, Gladys, have you no love for me — not the least little bit in the world, eh ?

GLADYS (*tragically*). It is fate. It is nature. The inexorable law finds no exception in my case.

ELIOT. You will love me, darling ?

GLADYS. Oh, Eliot, yes. (*ELIOT attempts to kiss her.*) No, no. (*Holds him at arm's length.*) The moment is not

a fitting one, I hear the sound of advancing footsteps. But, Eliot, — I feel it, I know it — *together* we will climb the hills of science ; *together* we will mount the ladder of philosophic research ; *together* we will scale the heights of intellectual — (*A noise without.*)

ELIOT (*kisses her hastily*). We will, my angel ; we will.
(*Enter NINA, C.*)

NINA. Oh ! I — I beg your pardon, Gladys, dear. I —

GLADYS. Nina, darling, let me introduce Eliot to you — our cousin, Eliot Champney ; Nina Crosby, our cousin from New York. (*Both bow.*)

ELIOT. Delighted to meet my cousin Nina.

GLADYS. Nina dear — Eliot — you will excuse me ; I have an essay to prepare that must be sent to the League by to-night's mail.

NINA. Certainly, dear. (*Exit GLADYS, kissing her hand to ELIOT behind NINA's back.*) I believe Aunt Dodge said you had just arrived from Europe, cousin Eliot. I'm sure it's delightful to welcome a new cousin. Did you come by way of New York ?

ELIOT. How good you are ! Yes ; and direct here from the ship.

NINA. How were stocks, did you notice ? Absolutely, it is like living in the wilderness here. Aunt Dodge disapproves of the daily papers ; she says they are too sensational.

ELIOT. Er — no. I — to tell the truth, dear cousin Nina, I am not, you know, at all conversant with stocks and bonds. I am as poor as a church mouse, and see no way of bettering myself.

NINA. Oh, nonsense ! Why, now, if I were a man I would go into Wall Street with five hundred dollars, and I'd keep such an eye on the "market," while I stood upon the "curbstone," that in less than one year I guarantee I'd be sitting in the New York Stock Exchange.

ELIOT. I haven't a doubt of it. And wouldn't — at least, if some bright, clever little girl would only take pity on me. (*Aside.*) I will not be accused of partiality. (*Aloud.*) If some one would only coach me —

NINA. Why, I will, dear cousin Eliot ; I will. Oh, what is there like money !

ELIOT. Nothing. I have never been able to find a substitute for it, although I have tried very hard, I assure you. Tailors, boot-makers, hosiers, glovers — they all insist upon the necessity of *money*.

NINA. Sensible people! What should we do without it? Gladys prates of "intellect;" we can't live upon that. What is there in this wide world that money cannot buy?

ELIOT (*sentimentally*). Dearest cousin, can greenbacks or silver dollars purchase true affection? Tell me.

NINA. I declare, you look really romantic. Well, no, I suppose not; but surely *one* of—of two people must have something for them both to subsist upon.

ELIOT. Truly. And what man with a grand and noble nature would refuse the bounty that might come to him—the cigars and sealskin top-coats, the alligator boots and Poole trousers—from the white hand and generous purse of the woman who loved him and whom he loved?

NINA. Of course.

ELIOT. And, kindled at the fire of her eyes, ambition might seize him for her own. Armed with a few thousands (*crosses with great fervor*), shone upon by the light of her smile, he could plunge into the abyss of Wall Street, and perchance come out a conqueror.

NINA. Oh, cousin Eliot, how eloquent you are!

ELIOT. Dearest Nina, you inspire me. What bull or bear is there into whose arms I would not rush, could I but know that you — (*Embarrassed*.)

NINA. That I? (*Crosses to him.*) That I, Eliot?

ELIOT. That you — oh, Nina, what will — what must you think of me? But the

"Immortals knew each other at first sight,
And Love is of them."

NINA. You — love me?

ELIOT. Deeply. Dare I hope that you in return care a little — a very little — for me?

NINA. Oh, Eliot, I —

(*Enter, C., MAUD.*)

ELIOT (*perceives her*). Ye gods! (*Aside.*) This must be number three.

MAUD. Nina darling, aunt — Oh, I beg your pardon!

NINA. Maud, love, this is Eliot Champney, Aunt Dodge's nephew. Miss Lawton, Eliot. Maud, I will go to aunt at once.

ELIOT (*kisses NINA'S hand behind MAUD*). And this (*Exit NINA, C.*) is my cousin Maud. (*Stands before her.*) My little Philadelphia cousin, is it not?

MAUD. Yes, cousin Eliot, I belong to the Philadelphia

branch. And you? I can't seem to place you on the family tree at all. I've been trying all the morning. See, here it is. (*At table, L. C., displays chart.*) Now, where do you belong?

ELIOT. Alas! I do not know. I fear I am one of those unprofitable twigs of whom the parent trunk takes no cognizance.

MAUD. Ah! (*Regretfully.*) I am so sorry! I never feel quite — quite sure of any one until I can place them.

ELIOT. Dear cousin Maud, couldn't you try to — er — “place” me? I should be so grateful to find out who I am through the instrumentality of such a being as — (*Holds mirror up to her face.*)

MAUD. Would you? Would you really? Well, then, we will go straight to work. Now (*they sit*), let me see; your mother was (*traces on chart with pencil*) Aunt Dodge's half-sister, and your grandfather, Antony Pomeroy, was — let me see —

ELIOT. Can't I assist you? (*Takes chart impressively.*) Dearest cousin mine, behold! Here aloft, on this topmost limb, hangs my father.

MAUD. Oh, where? (*Gazes.*) Yes, to be sure — the worthy scion of a noble race. Oh, cousin Eliot (*ecstatically*), what is there to equal blood? (*Holds chart over her head.*)

ELIOT. Nothing, sweet cousin Maud — nothing. There has not yet been discovered, so far as I know, any equivalent for the vital fluid. Rob a man of that, and you rob him of life itself. (*Emphasis.*)

MAUD. Is it not so? Oh, I am so happy to find that you feel as I do on this important subject!

ELIOT. According to my poor light, dear cousin Maud. If you — (*Crosses. Aside.*) Spirit of impartiality, I invoke thy aid! (*Crosses. To MAUD.*) If you would undertake to inculcate in my alien soul the true principles of — of —

MAUD. Heraldry, heredity, genealogy, and —

ELIOT. Precisely. How happy I should be!

MAUD. Would you?

ELIOT. Ah, would I! Dearest Maud, I — I dare, now that you have “placed” me, now that you know 'tis no lowly born or undescended wretch who stands before you — I dare to —

MAUD. Oh, Eliot, not really —

ELIOT. I love you. May I venture to hope that you are not indifferent to me?

MAUD. Oh, no ; I could not be "indifferent" to a member of *our* family.

ELIOT. You love me ?

MAUD. Sincerely. (ETHEL *heard singing.*)

(*Enter* ETHEL, R.)

ETHEL. Hello, Maud ! Oh, is this our cousin Eliot ? How are you ? (*Shakes hands with him.*)

ELIOT. I am delighted — delighted.

MAUD. Eliot, I —

ETHEL (*down c. Aside*). 'Pon my word, he's better-looking than his photo. Why, he's a perfect dear.

ELIOT (*kissing MAUD's brow, up c.*). Must you leave me, dearest ? Well —

MAUD. I must seek the fresh air. (*Exit* MAUD, C.)

ETHEL (*sits*). Which do you like best, coz, New York or Paris ? (*Eats bonbons.*)

ELIOT. Neither. But I (*stands before her*) adore Newport.

ETHEL (*coquettishly*). Why ?

ELIOT (*aside*). Number four is decidedly brisk. (*To* ETHEL.) Because, cousin Ethel, I find *you* here.

ETHEL. Dear me, how lovely ! Have a chocolate cream ? Do.

ELIOT. Only half of one ; half of *yours*. Thanks.

ETHEL. How do you like Maud ?

ELIOT. Immensely. She is *your* cousin.

ETHEL. Have you met the rest ?

ELIOT. Some of them, but I forget which ones *now*.

ETHEL. Fond of the theatre ?

ELIOT. Are you ?

ETHEL. Guess I am !

ELIOT. Then so am I.

ETHEL. Do you like tobogganing ?

ELIOT. I delight in anything involving risk, even the risk of breaking my neck.

ETHEL. Or your heart — eh ?

ELIOT. Or my heart, if I have one.

ETHEL. Oh, pshaw ! Guess you haven't lost it yet, have you ? (*Coyly.*)

ELIOT. Have I not ? Oh, dearest cousin Ethel, upon my soul (*confused*), a fellow who stops long in America hasn't much chance of keeping his head, setting aside his heart. If you —

ETHEL. If I? Go ahead. (*A pause.*) Fire away. If I? Well?

ELIOT. Don't you know, Ethel?

ETHEL. Give it up.

ELIOT. I — I love you, Ethel.

ETHEL. Oh, chestnut! Tell me something new and strange, can't you?

ELIOT. Have you no affection for — for me?

ETHEL. Bushels! Lots!

ELIOT. Dearest Ethel!

ETHEL (*tragically*). Adored Eliot! Oh, say, Ellie (*matter-of-factly*), don't buy me a solitaire; I'd rather have a cluster. (*Noise without.*) Oh, mercy upon us! that's Aline. I know her step. (*Starts away.*) See you later. It is Aline. She's the fifth cousin — the French one. Can't stay. You must introduce yourself while I run to tell Aunt Dodge that I'm engaged at last. (*Exit L.*)

ELIOT. "Engaged!" (*Enter, C., ALINE, slowly.*) Aline! Aline here! It cannot — no — yes — (*To ALINE.*) Aline, *ma petite! mon petit trésor!*

ALINE (*seeing him*). *Eliote! toi! Oh, quel bonheur!* Are you — *you* the nephew that Aunt Dodge expects?

ELIOT. I am, my darling. And you — you are — she is —

ALINE. I am ze niece — ze French niece — and she ees ze female relative zat I come to visit.

ELIOT. Oh, I see. And you never got my letter?

ALINE. Not a line, *tres cher*.

ELIOT. But you knew that I loved you; that to me you are the only woman in the world; that however far my footsteps (*aside*) or my words (*to ALINE*) may have wandered, my heart was, is, ever shall be, yours alone, *n'est-ce pas, chérie?*

(*Enter, C., MRS. D., holding with one hand ETHEL and GLADYS, with the other NINA and MAUD, their faces indicative of horror, anger, and consternation.*)

MRS. D. (*advancing with four girls*). You scapegrace, Eliot!

MAUD. Unprincipled deceiver!

ETHEL. Fraud!

GLADYS. Wretch!

NINA. Pauper!

} (*All at once.*)

ELIOT. Dearest aunt, beloved cousins, spare my blushes, and Aline's. I know too well all that you would say. I feel

only too sure of your heartfelt congratulations (*all stagger with astonishment*), your loving good wishes. Aunt Dodge, you have ever been a mother to me. Sweet cousins, I *know* you all love me, and will rejoice in my happiness. Aunt, behold your scapegrace nephew's seraph. Bless us. Don't refuse, I implore. (*Kneels, ALINE also.*)

MRS. D. But — these disappointed —

ELIOT. No "*but*s." (*The four girls express scorn and dismay.*) I promised to be impartial. I will be. They shall *all, all* be my bride's — (*Clasps ALINE.*)

ALL (*including ALINE*). What! What!

ELIOT. — *Maids!*

MRS. D. Oh, you scapegrace!

(ELIOT and ALINE, C., MRS. D., U. C., *blessing them as they kneel*, GLADYS and MAUD, L., ETHEL and NINA, R. *as music ff.*)

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